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Data Shows Maryland Missing the Mark for Children; Children of Color Face Particularly Daunting Disparities

Inaccurate Census Count Would Threaten Progress - \$2.5 billion in Federal Funding at Risk

BALTIMORE — Maryland’s children and youth are faring slightly better, according to the *2018 KIDS COUNT[®] Data Book* released today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The report shows the state ranked just 14th nationwide. But advocates argue the state can, and must, do better, particularly when it comes to closing the gaps between children of color and their white peers. And they warn that the upcoming census, if not handled properly, has the potential to drive the state further back.

The annual *KIDS COUNT Data Book* from the Annie E. Casey Foundation is a premier nationwide data tool to measure how Maryland’s children are faring across key issue areas. The *Data Book* uses 16 indicators to rank each state across four domains — health, education, economic well-being and family and community — as an assessment of child well-being.

Inaccurate Census Puts 53,000 Children at Risk

The Data Book reports 15 percent of Maryland’s kids are at risk of being undercounted in the upcoming 2020 census, putting federally funded supports that have driven youth success in jeopardy. And the potential undercount could cost the state roughly \$2.5 billion in federal funding across 10 programs aimed at helping children and youth.

“Some respondents believe the count is for adults only, while others do not include children because of the respondents’ concern about their citizenship or status as an unauthorized caregiver,” said Nonso Umunna, research director at Advocates for Children and Youth. “In addition, some respondents live in remote rural areas or are transient with no permanent address.”

An accurate census is important for Maryland for several reasons. “Although Maryland is one of the richest states in the nation and ranks 14th overall in the nation for child well-being indicators, it still needs federal funds to help address the disparities that children of color and children in under-resourced communities face,” said Umunna. “When children are not counted, state and local agencies face losing billions of federal dollars for supports — like education, school lunches, Head Start, Medicaid, SNAP, CHIP — that have maintained or improved gains to ensure our most vulnerable have the opportunity to start a healthy life.”

The estimate undercount is particularly disturbing since Maryland receives substantial funding to cover such programs as the Medical Assistance Program (Medicaid for Children) and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). These two programs are the most heavily funded and account for more than 55 percent of the state’s federal allotment for social programs. Last year, 447,000 and 350,409 children received Medicaid and SNAP benefits, respectively.

Although Maryland has made several positive strides, it will be jeopardized without an exact count. “Time is short but it is not too late to conduct a census that provides proper funding, representation and programs for the continued healthy development of children,” said Jennifer Bevan-Dangel, executive director of Advocates

for Children and Youth. “All state and local officials must engage their partners to devise solutions to reach hard-to count households and increase participation in the 2020 census.”

The Data: Indicators on Education, Health Improving; Family and Community Slipping

Advocates for Children and Youth, the KIDS COUNT organization for Maryland, released the report along with disaggregated data to show how children of color were doing in comparison to their Non-Hispanic white peers.

- **Economic well-being**—Maryland ranks **15th**. There are troubling signs, as the number of children living in **high poverty** increased 25 percent since 2008-2012, with a total of 64,000 of Maryland’s children now living in **high-poverty** areas.
 - African American children were living in poverty at twice the rate of their white counterparts with 80,000 (19 percent) children versus 43,000 (8 percent) for their non-Hispanic white peers. African American children were more than 5 times as likely to live in high-poverty areas than their white counterparts. Indeed, 45,000 (11 percent) African American children live in high-poverty areas versus 10,000 (2 percent) of their non-Hispanic white peers.
 - **Education**—Maryland ranks **9th**. Although more students are graduating on time, there is still the need for pre-k to prepare young minds and create excitement about learning.
 - Disaggregated data show that across all groups—African-American, Hispanic and white—there needs to be more focus on early childhood education as there are approximately 77,000 or 50 percent of young children (3 and 4 years old) are not in school. State data also show that black and brown youth face far stricter discipline in schools, receiving suspensions at three times the rate of their white peers.
 - **Family and community**—Maryland ranks **22nd**. Maryland has seen a 41 percent decline between 2010 and 2016, with 16 births per 1,000 females between ages 15 and 19 in 2016.
 - State disaggregated data show that African-American teens are three times more likely to become mothers with a rate of 23 per 1,000 females ages 15 to 19 while Hispanic females are four times as likely with 39 per 1,000 females ages 15 to 19. Both groups are higher than that of non-Hispanic white females at 8 per 1,000 females ages 15 to 19.
 - State disaggregated data show that African-American babies face higher mortality rates, twice the rate of white babies, and the disparity is growing.
- Health**—Maryland ranks **17th**. Maryland is steadily chipping away at the number of children who lack health insurance as 45,000 still need coverage.
 - In Maryland, only about one-third of dentists accept Medicaid, creating additional hurdles for children in accessing care, particularly in communities of color.

“Maryland considers itself a leader, but we are not leading the way for our children and youth. We can do better. By focusing on policies, programs, and funding that will close those disparity gaps, we will improve outcomes for all our children,” said Bevan-Dangel. “Advocates for Children and Youth is the only group working across Maryland and across all issue areas to impact every aspect of a child’s life. For the sake of the 1.3 million children who call Maryland home, we must do more.”

Advocates for Children and Youth will be releasing additional information on policies needed to close the disparity gaps over the summer.

Release Information

The 2018 KIDS COUNT® Data Book will be available June 27 at 12:01 a.m. EDT at www.aecf.org. Additional information is available at www.aecf.org/databook, which also contains the most recent national, state and local data on hundreds of indicators of child well-being.

Journalists interested in creating maps, graphs and rankings in stories about the Data Book can use the KIDS COUNT Data Center at datacenter.kidscount.org.

***Advocates for Children and Youth** improves the lives and experiences of Maryland's children by advancing policies and programs that tackle disparities facing our children and youth and close the equity gaps in the areas of education, child welfare, health, economic security and youth justice.*

***The Annie E. Casey Foundation** creates a brighter future for the nation's children by developing solutions to strengthen families, build paths to economic opportunity, transform struggling communities into safer and healthier places to live, work, and grow. For more information, visit www.aecf.org. KIDS COUNT® is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.*

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